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COINS...
...COINS FOR A POOR LOST SOUL.
WON'T ANYONE TAKE PITY ON A DOWN-ON-HIS-LUCK DEMON?
DEMON MASSAGES
Ah.
YOU'RE LATE.
YOU KEPT ME WAITING IN A FILTHY ALLEY IN THIS DAMNABLE CITY...

...AND I DON'T APPRECIATE IT.
I'M SORRY, IT COULDN'T BE HELPED. YOU HAVE IT?
SPLANG
OF COURSE.
DON'T FAIL ME.
I WOULDN'T DREAM OF IT.
EASILY SUMMONED, UNDETECTABLE BY ANY MAGICAL MEANS...
...IT SHOULD SUIT OUR PURPOSES PERFECTLY.
I'M SURE YOU WOULDN'T...
...AND I'M SURE YOU'LL MAKE CERTAIN THIS CANNOT BE TRACED TO ME.

SO WHAT DO WE HAVE TODAY, JULIAN?
THE MASTERS OF THREE ANCILLARY GUILDS ARE MAKING OFFICIAL VISITS.
THEY ARRIVED A SHORT TIME AGO AND I'VE ALREADY GREETED THEM.
THEY AWAIT YOU IN THE LeCAVALIER SANCTUARY.
YOU RECEIVED THE SCROLLS BRIEFING YOU AS TO THE INDIVIDUAL GUILDS AND MASTERS?
I DID.
OSTENSIBLY, OF COURSE, THEY'RE HERE TO PAY THEIR RESPECTS TO NOUVEAU'S NEW MASTER.
BUT THEY'RE CERTAINLY HOPING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF YOUR INEXPERIENCE AND IMPROVE THEIR RESPECTIVE ALLIANCES.

THEN WE SHOULD SET A TONE.
EARLY.
WHAT WOULD YOU THINK OF A TOUR OF THE CATHEDRAL?
KLIK
LET THE MAGNIFICENCE OF THEIR SURROUNDINGS MAKE AN IMPRESSION UPON THEM?
JUST SO.
KLAK
RUMORS OF YOU *PERSONALLY* ENABLING THE RECONSTRUCTION WILL HAVE SPREAD BY NOW.
THE MASTERS WILL KNOW THEY'RE DEALING WITH A FIGURE TO BE RECKONED WITH, NOT A NOVICE.
PERFECT.
SOUNDS LIKE A FULL DAY...

...WE'D BETTER GET STARTED.

I KNOW YOU DON'T RELISH THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF YOUR POSITION, GENEVIEVE...
...BUT THE SUPPORT OF THE ANCILLARY GUILDS IS A NECESSITY.
WE SHOULDN'T KEEP THEM WAITING.
ONLY A MOMENT LONGER, JULIAN.
"THERE'S ALWAYS TIME TO ADMIRE A BLOSSOM."
DO YOU KNOW WHO TAUGHT ME THAT WHEN I WAS JUST A GIRL?
I REMEMBER. BUT ARE YOU REMINDING ME THAT *I'M* OLD...
...OR THAT *YOU* WERE A GOOD STUDENT?

GOOD MORNING, EVERYONE.
I'M GENEVIEVE VILLARD, MASTER OF THE NOUVEAU GUILD.
WELCOME TO OUR CATHEDRAL.
WE APPRECIATE YOUR PATIENCE AND ARE FLATTERED BY YOUR VISIT.
WE OF THE NOUVEAU ARE ALWAYS PLEASED TO RECEIVE OUR FRIENDS FROM THE ANCILLARY GUILDS.
I'M TOLD YOU'VE ALREADY MET MY CHIEF OF STAFF, JULIAN DUCARD.
INDEED.
MASTER VILLARD, IT IS MY GREAT PLEASURE TO PRESENT TO YOU...

...MASTER SENGAL OF THE SAMEDI GUILD...
THANK YOU FOR RECEIVING ME.
...MASTER GUO OF THE DRAGON GUILD...
HONORED.
...AND MASTER SHAEDRA OF THE PROTEAN GUILD.
I'VE LOOKED FORWARD TO THIS MEETING FOR SOME TIME.
I TRUST WE CAN BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT WILL BE BENEFICIAL TO *ALL* OUR GUILDS. THERE ARE A GREAT MANY THINGS FOR US TO DISCUSS...
...BUT I THOUGHT WE MIGHT BEGIN WITH A TOUR OF THE CATHEDRAL.
WE WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED.

AS YOU SEE, WE'VE BEEN FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO RECOVER FROM THE DISASTER THAT CLAIMED OUR ORIGINAL STRUCTURE.
IMPRESSIVE.
I'M JUST PLEASED WE WERE ABLE TO RESTORE THE TRUE HEART OF OUR GUILD.
YOU BARGAINED WITH THE EQUAR ARCHITECTS, DID YOU NOT?
I DID.
IT WAS A... MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL AGREEMENT.
THEN YOU *DO* UNDERSTAND THE IMPORTANCE...
...OF MAINTAINING...
...A NETWORK OF ALLIANCES.
I TRUST YOUR REGIME WILL NOT UNDERESTIMATE HOW *USEFUL* THE SUPPORT OF GUILDS SUCH AS OURS CAN BE IN THE POLITICAL STRUGGLES OF CIRESS.
I ASSURE YOU, MASTER GUO, I VALUE THE AID OF THE ANCILLARY GUILDS.
LET US HOPE FOR TOO LONG THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF MY PARTICULAR GUILD HAVE BEEN TAKEN FOR GRANTED.
IT WOULD BE MOST TRAGIC IF THIS WERE TO REMAIN UNCHANGED.

KEEP AN EYE ON THAT ONE. HE CONCERNS ME
YES SIR
NOUVEAU HAS A LONG TRADITION OF EQUITABLE RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ANCILLARIES
I HAVE NO INTENTION OF CHANGING THAT POLICY
WE THREE
SAMEDI, DRAGON PROTEAN
COULD FORM A POWERFUL BLOCK IF ALIGNED WITH *ANY ONE* OF THE MAJOR GUILDS
FIRST WE LISTEN TO WHAT NOUVEAU HAS TO OFFER
THOUGH I *WOULD* BE MORE COMFORTABLE HAVING SUCH DISCUSSIONS IN A PRIVATE SETTING
OF COURSE
WE CAN CONTINUE OUR CONVERSATION IN THE GARDENS. THEY'VE ALWAYS BEEN MY FAVORITE ASPECT OF THE CATHEDRAL
JULIAN, IF YOU AND THE GUARDS WOULD LEAVE US FOR A TIME?

I'M NOT SURE BEING ALONE WITH THEM IS THE WISEST CHOICE, MASTER VILLARD
AT LEAST PERMIT *ME* TO ACCOMPANY
THEY'RE OUR *GUESTS*, JULIAN. IT'S FINE
I HOPE THAT'S TRUE
NOW
YOU HAVE ME ALL TO YOURSELVES
PLEASE, SPEAK CANDIDLY
BEAR IN MIND, MASTER VILLARD, WE SPEAK NOT SOLELY FOR OURSELVES BUT FOR *ALL* THE ANCILLARY GUILDS
YOUR ASCENSION IS BEING VIEWED AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CORRECT THE INJUSTICES OF THE PAST
IT IS HOPED *YOU* WILL HAVE THE COURAGE TO BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE

NONE OF THE MAJORS HAVE EVER RESPECTED MY GUILD'S SHAPESHIFTING GIFTS
I CAN SPEAK ONLY FOR THE NOUVEAU
YOU KNOW THAT
THEN SPEAK FOR NOUVEAU!
WE LOOK TO YOU AS AN ALLY
SOMEONE WHO WILL TREAT US AS PARTNERS RATHER THAN PAWNS!
DID YOU THINK WE'D ALLOW THE HIGH AND MIGHTY TO WALK UPON US FOREVER?
YOUR ANGER IS MISPLACED
COMPROMISES CAN BE REACHED
BUT UNDERSTAND COMPROMISE IS FAR DIFFERENT THAN CAPITULATION
WHAT MORE MUST WE GIVE? ALREADY WE'VE
TALK TALK TALK
ENOUGH TALK
YOUR TYRANNY HAS GONE ON TOO LONG

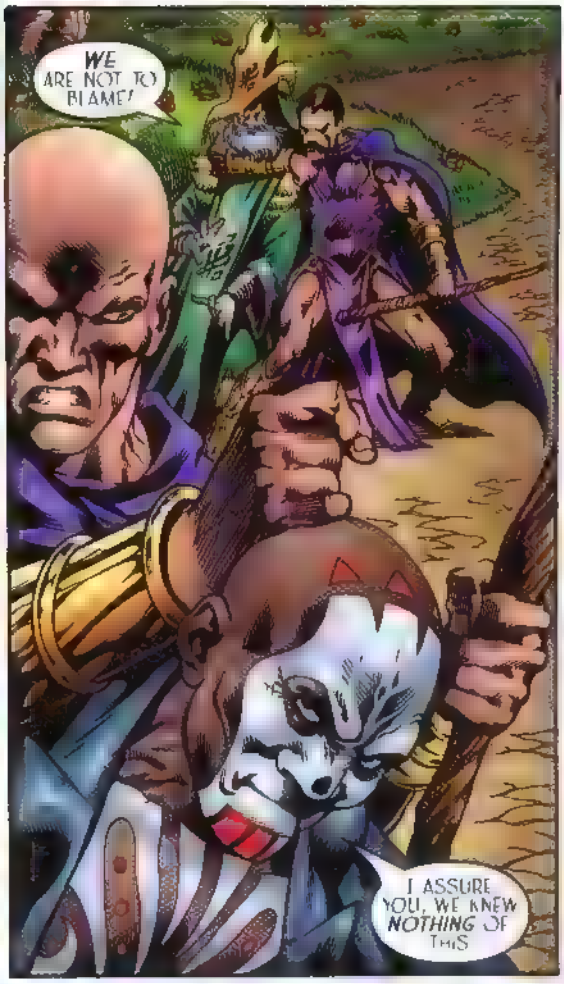
TODAY IT ENDS IN BLOOD!
CHANK!
YOU CAN'T SAVE YOURSELF, NOUVEAU WITCH! NOT FROM THIS BLADE
FAITH

NOT FROM ME!
AAAH!
SHRIP!
YOUR REIGN IS OVER, GUILD MASTER!
I WORKED TOWARD THIS MY ENTIRE LIFE
YOU THINK I'D ALLOW YOU TO TAKE IT AWAY SO SOON?

GYAAAH!

MASTER VELLARD?
GENEVIEVE!
ARE YOU HARMED?
NOTHING SERIOUS. TOLEAN JUST A SCRATCH
BUT WHAT
HOW COULD THIS HAVE HAPPENED?
THE TRUE PROTEAN MASTER WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN SO EASILY SUBDUED
SO I SUSPECT SOME OTHER SHAPESHIFTER TOOK HER PLACE. THE DAGGER MUST HAVE BEEN CREATED SPECIFICALLY FOR THIS DEED
PROTECTED AGAINST THE CATHEDRAL'S WARDS SO THAT IT COULD BE SUMMONED AND THIS
I'M NOT SURE WHAT TO MAKE OF IT. MY SPELL'S PURPOSE WAS TO INCAPACITATE NOT TO KILL

THE ATTACKER CHOSE TO PERISH RATHER THAN BE TAKEN
TO KEEP US FROM LEARNING THE TRUTH BEHIND THE ASSASS NATION PLOT
WHAT OF THE OTHER MASTERS?


WE ARE NOT TO BLAME!
I ASSURE YOU, WE KNEW NOTHING OF THIS

RELEASE THEM
IT S OBVIOUS WE VE ALL BEEN THE VICTIMS OF DUPLICITY
YES BUT WHOSE?

THAT S WHAT CONCERNS ME MOST JULIAN WE HAVE AN ENEMY OUT THERE
AND NO IDEA WHO IT IS

GEN?
I DECIDED IT WAS TOO NICE A NIGHT TO SPEND IT ALONE AND HERE I FIND YOU DOING THE SAME THING
Hiya
SO HOW WAS YOUR DAY?
OH THE USUAL. SURVIVED AN ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT, THAT SORT OF THING
YOU WHAT?
ARE YOU OKAY?

FINE. I'M FINE, EVERYTHING'S OKAY...
...BUT I'M TRUTHFULLY TOO EXHAUSTED TO EVEN TALK ABOUT IT RIGHT NOW.
WHAT ABOUT YOUR DAY?
LESS EXCITING THAN YOURS. I SPENT IT WITH THIERRY, LOOKING IN THE ART GALLERIES DOWN BY THE WATERFRONT.
YOU KNOW, 'ELLE, I WAS THE ONE WHO WANTED THE RESPONSIBILITY. I WORKED TO GET IT. NOW...
...SOMETIMES IT FEELS LIKE SUCH A BIG WEIGHT TO SHOULDER ALL THE TIME.
EVEN WHEN I DIDN'T WANT YOU TO BE, YOU WERE THERE FOR ME, GEN.
HERE...
...YOU KNOW WHOSE SHOULDER YOU CAN ALWAYS LEAN ON.

MASTER?
I'M SORRY TO DISTURB YOU IN YOUR SANCTUM, BUT THERE'S NEWS.
EARLIER TODAY THERE WAS APPARENTLY AN ATTEMPT ON THE LIFE OF THE NOUVEAU MASTER.
A SHAPESHIFTER GAINED ACCESS TO THE NOUVEAU CATHEDRAL BY MASQUERADING AS MASTER OF THE PROTEAN GUILD, BUT VILLARD WAS UNHARMED.
AND THE ASSASSIN?
DEAD.
SO IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO KNOW IF THE ATTEMPT WAS THE PRODUCT OF ONE DERANGED INDIVIDUAL, OR PART OF A LARGER PLOT.
HOW UNFORTUNATE.
A DISTURBING TURN OF EVENTS, LILLA. IF HARM COULD BEFALL ONE OF MY FELLOW MASTERS IN HER OWN CATHEDRAL...
...THEN WHO AMONG US IS TRULY SAFE?

MOMO?
AGAIN, MOMO.
SURE, BOSS. I'M RIGHT HERE.
HOW *AMUSED* INGRA WOULD BE TO SEE ME REDUCED TO THIS STATE, AND THESE WRETCHED SURROUNDINGS.
AND ALL BECAUSE OF A *WOMAN*.
SOON, THOUGH...
...SOON I'LL BE WHOLE AGAIN.
HELP ME UP.
YOU *SURE*, BOSS? I MEAN, YOU'RE NOT EXACTLY IN GREAT SHAPE.

IT WASN'T A REQUEST.
WE WERE SIMPLY UNPREPARED, ANIMORA AND I. WE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE EXTENT OF THE SIGIL'S POWER.
JACKET.
THAT'S A MISTAKE I'LL NOT MAKE AGAIN.
I CERTAINLY CAN'T GO BACK TO ELYSIA AND THE FIRST.
BUT IF THE RUMORS ARE TRUE...
...THEN ANIMORA WAS IMPRISONED ON THE SPIRIT PLANE RATHER THAN DESTROYED.
SO WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, BOSS?
I'M GOING TO *FREE* HER...
...AND TOGETHER WE'LL REAP OUR VENGEANCE ON THIS MISERABLE PLANET *AND* GISELLE VILLARD.